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NIGHTS AT THE OPERA

WAGNER'S
LOHENGRIN

By Wakeling Dry



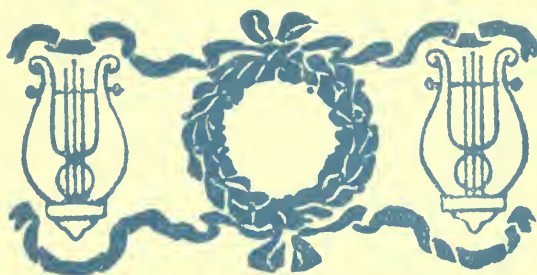


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NIGHTS AT THE OPERA



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RICHARD WAGNER

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WAGNER'S LOHENGRIN

By Wakeling Dry

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I. THE MAKER OF THE MUSIC.

AT Leipzig, on the 22nd of May, 1813—the beginning : at Venice, on the 13th of February, 1883—the end ; and in the little while between, the aspirations, the drudgery, the disappointments, and the final triumph which make up the life-story of that many-sided genius, Richard Wagner !

How short a time since he was laid to rest and yet how long ago it all seems when we think of the enthusiasts who wrote about the Music of the Future—who formed little societies such as the Dannreuther Working Men's Society to sing and play him, if not into public

favour, at least into the appreciation of the thoughtful. Even longer ago still, it seems, when we recall the wonderful things in the way of criticism that came from those who sat in judgment on matters musical in the days, when Wagner's music was "the apogee of hideousness, a distracting and altogether distressing noise, a mere blaring of brass, and a short method of utterly ruining the voice!" But there has been much eating of words since then.

In England, partly by reason of the quiet but far-reaching influence of Dannreuther, partly by the growth of a fashion, Wagner's music was known by not a few in the concert room long before his life-work, in salvation of the opera, was presented on the stage. And besides this knowledge of his music, the analytical programme told

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us years ago those details of his life which have now become the common stock of the biographer. Wagner's first effort in poetry, his desultory learning of the piano, his utter fiasco in the case of an overture at the Leipzig Theatre, the beginning of his career as chorus-master at Warzburg, his terrible journey from Pillau to Paris by way of London ; the cruel circumstances which drove him, when in Paris, to arrange quadrilles for the cornet and piano to keep himself from starving ; his flight, first to Weimar and then to Zurich, when the revolution of 1849 inflamed him ; all this and much more is familiar reading at the present time—when an intimate knowledge of all that has been written about a musician is an infinitely more common possession than even a nodding acquaintance with the great man's music.

Wagner at eighteen knew Beethoven by heart. How much music, it were well to ask, does the average student or the music lover think it really necessary to know in this way ?

Bach, Beethoven and Wagner—these form a trio in themselves : and no one need give a moment's thought to the question, "Which is the greatest ?"—much less is one called upon to express an opinion. As well might we be concerned in a comparison between Orestes and Hamlet. And yet, from the point of view of the development of the art of music these three potent names follow each other in a natural order. The subject matter of Bach, woven by means of counterpoint into a living expression of his ideas, was perfected by Wagner in his "Leading motive." The idea is Wagner's ; and although the labelling

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of the motives more often depends upon the imagination of the commentator, yet when valued at its true worth as we now are able to understand it, it serves a good purpose. In his letters—those to Liszt alone fill a large volume—and in the directions written upon his scores, Wagner has left a rich treasure of information for our guidance. Those who are learning to sing might with great advantage acquaint themselves with what Wagner has written thereon. We should hear a little less then about the effect of Wagner's music upon the voice.

The emotional aspect of music which Beethoven, in the course of his progress in orchestration, opened to our view was grasped by Wagner in all its completeness and with all its potentialities. In this, and the weaving

of the thematic construction into a foundation of poetry, we have, in a few words, the substance and the fulfilment of Wagner's life-work on the Lyric Drama. At this time music, in Germany, had become as it were a fine river into which the music of Beethoven was poured until the stream flowed swift and deep and strong. Upon this noble river Wagner launched once more the Opera, which had first been launched at the end of the sixteenth century by Peri and Caccini in their attempt to combine the old Greek Drama with its sister-art, Music. But the vessel once launched had drifted like that in the "Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner" into a place from which there was apparently no return.

Glück had made a brave attempt to grasp the tiller, and to infuse some life

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into the dispirited crew. But he was not strong enough to do more than to get the prow to point in the required direction. Mozart, the peerless maker of sweet melodies, also came on board and made the vessel glorious with fresh colours and new sails. But this did not fill the sails with wind and the ship remained becalmed. It was Wagner who finally cleared the decks and, by means of his operas, got the ship under weigh, until he succeeded at length in steering her into the clear and open sea. The progress was like that of every other great work, gradual and well-considered. It commenced with *Der Fliegende Holländer*, produced at Dresden in 1843, the first of the group of operas which belong to the so-called "second manner" of Wagner, since *Die Feen*, *Das Liebesverbot* and *Rienzi* may be left

out of the question, and it was continued in *Tannhäuser* (1845), and in *Lohengrin* (1847).

Three years later, when Liszt was producing *Lohengrin* at Weimar, Wagner, though an exile from his native land, was already composing the works of his third and greatest period, which culminated in his crowning triumphs, those unsurpassed Lyric Dramas, in which he achieved to the full his ideal union of poetry, drama, music, and scenic effect—in *Tristan & Isolde*, *Der Ring*, and *Parsifal*.

Wagner, at first distrusted as an innovator, has come, on better acquaintance, to be loved as a renovator. Mozart had made form his slave without turning it adrift. He and Haydn were regarded as the key-stones in musical architecture. It is not difficult

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to understand that Moscheles regarded Beethoven as an impossibility. How much less difficult to understand the storm that raged round Wagner. And yet Wagner himself wrote of Mozart : "It was from the realm of dramatic music, already widened by himself to an undreamt capability of expression, that Mozart first entered upon the symphony. For those few of his symphonies whose peculiar worth has kept them alive to this day we owe to the period when he had fully unfolded his genius as a composer of opera."

The humanity of Shakespeare is the secret of his greatness, and this is shown by the art with which he makes the blending of the humorous with the serious acceptable to us. The greatness of Mozart's Don Juan lies in his

Wagner's

artistic treatment of the conventional comic opera form coupled with his moderation in the treatment of recitative. As Wagner joins hands with Peri in respect of the ideal union of music and poetry in his Lyric Drama, so, in Lohengrin, he adds a finishing touch to the form of opera evolved by Mozart and Weber. The recitative is treated in a more expressive way, the orchestra assumes the explanatory character of the chorus in the Greek drama, the romanticism of Weber is developed and enriched, and the result remains as a tribute to Wagner's genius, as the most popular opera in any part of the world where audiences are to be found that are able to distinguish between beautiful music and the attractiveness of mere tune.

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It is in the development of the *Leitmotiv* (which may be conveniently referred to as the *motive*) that Wagner's supremacy lies. It was not unknown to Wagner's predecessors, but he was the first to make it, from his first use of it in *Der Fliegende Holländer* rather more than a mere characteristic of the various people in the story. Mozart in *Don Juan*, Weber in *Der Freyschutz*, had given us evidences of its existence, but their treatment of it, if not crude, was undecided. In *Lohengrin* it is first seen to approach its full meaning, as Wagner showed us, when he left opera as a finished structure and revealed his mastership in his *Lyric Dramas*. It was *Lohengrin* that consoled Wagner at Vienna after his return from exile, when *Tristan* had been given up as impossible after fifty-seven rehearsals.

Wagner's

And it was Lohengrin, it will be remembered, that brought about the fulfilment of the dearest wish of Wagner's heart—the building of a temple for the proper presentation of his later works. It was by this opera that King Ludwig of Bavaria was first attracted to the “new music,” and it was through the enthusiasm which its beauty awoke in him that he was led to adopt its creator as his friend. Those who have made the pilgrimage to Bayreuth know the result of the friendship thus begun.

There is no music of Wagner's that is so characteristic, as a whole, as that of Lohengrin. Its oneness is supreme. The alternation of the two chords, major and minor, which herald the approach of the silver-clad knight stamp themselves for ever on the listener's mind,

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and can never be used without awakening memories of the source from which they are taken. It is not possible to play any part of the Lohengrin music which would be unrecognised by the opera-goer. Wagner knew the impossibility of dividing it into sections or selections, and when the time came for his publisher to issue a portion of it, he arranged nine of the numbers himself.

Of its popularity there is no question. Its production marks the starting point of Wagner's successful career. Like Don Juan, it stands out as a perfect work of art, and in it there is a wealth of musical ideas, apart from the motives, which are not to be found in any other except *Die Meistersinger*. Now-a-days no wedding is complete unless its "Bridal Music" figures in the organist's pro-

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gramme. Mendelssohn and Wagner—in church, it is as well to remember—have for ever impressed themselves on the social life of the people.

II. THE STORY OF THE SWAN-KNIGHT.

IN the choice of his stories out of which to realise his ideal union of poetry and music, Wagner shows us the chief of his attributes, that of a keen perception of the value of theatrical effect. His first dip into the priceless treasures of the past, led him to the old German stories of Tannhäuser and the song contest of the Wartburg ; and the fascination which this rich storehouse exercised over him drew him on to Lohengrin and Parsifal.

The story of the Swan-Knight has its beginnings in the Anglo-Saxon, Danish and Longobardian legends of the Skiff ("Sceaf"). It is found in the

four romances called Mabinogion, a product of the occupation of the coast of Wales by the Irish, wherein ancient Irish mythology is mixed up with later Arthurian legends.

The idea of people being changed into Swans is common enough in German fairy tales. In Ireland, Fionnula, the daughter of Lin, kept guard over the lakes, in the form of a swan, for hundreds of years, and the scene of action in various versions of the legend has been the Rhine, the Meuse and the Scheldt.

The Swan is a special favourite of northern folk-lore. Wagner's friend, the King of Bavaria, had a beautiful castle, once called the Schwanstein, now Hohen-schwangau. It has a Swan-legend of its own, of course. A beautiful lady is sought by a wicked uncle and accused

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by him of crime before the Emperor. She gazes out upon the blue lake which nestles far down in the valley, shut in by the jagged rocks. Here she sees a swan drawing a fragile shell in which a knight lies asleep. The knight comes to her aid, fights her battle and takes her to his heart. But she asks his name, and the spell is broken. Wringing her hands in agony, she sees him step back into his boat, and mysteriously, as he came, disappear for ever.

The locality in which the events told in the legend took place varies with each version. Now it is a lake, now a river, in one case the Rhine, in another the Meuse, or the Scheldt ; but it is of special interest to note that the story was carried across to the Continent from Britain, and after being used as material by the Jongleur of France and the Min-

nesinger of Germany, was brought back to our shores by the Norman Minstrels.

The other salient point of the story, so far as the drama is concerned, is that of the fatal curiosity and inevitable punishment of a wife wedded to an unknown husband. In "Jupiter and Semele," in the "Cupid and Psyche" of Apuleius, in "Partempris and Amelor," in "Raymond and Melusine," in the story of the goddess Ganga in the *Rigveda*, in the household stories of Grimm, we find it told over and over again.

The actual story employed by Wagner is that put into the mouth of the Minnesinger, Wolfram of Eschenbach, at the imaginary Song-contest at the Wartburg in or about the year 1207. Of the idea of blending the mystically beautiful traditions of the Grail with the Swan-legend, Christian of Troyes gives

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us a foretaste in 1170. Little by little, the ancient poets built up round it their fanciful descriptions of the homes and doings of their heroes, gathering details here and there, partly true and partly imaginative, which they wove into a garland of decoration.

Out of all these poetic ideas slowly grew the idea that the stronghold of the tale was Montsalvat, a castle among the inaccessible crags of the Pyrenees, wherein the Grail was to be placed for safeguard. Wolfram of Eschenbach gives us the story, weighed down with all sorts of picturesque religious observances. Wagner, with the keen eye and the unerring hand of the born stage-manager, restores it to us in much of its simple and direct purity.

In the Lyric Drama of "Parsifal" we learn all that happened before the Swan-

Knight, Lohengrin, arrived upon the river bank at Antwerp. Parsifal, the "pure fool," the Priest-King, had succeeded Amfortas, and peace reigned in Montsalvat. At daybreak an entrancing melody summoned the dwellers in that mystical region to worship, to daily service, and afterwards to refreshing sleep. Whenever, in the outside world, Innocence or Right stood in danger of oppression, a warning bell sounded and a flame appeared on the sacred vessel. It was on one of these occasions, when the long calm was about to be broken, and while the knights feasted around their King, that the warning sound was heard and burning letters, flaming fiercely forth upon the sacred vessel, told that Lohengrin was to be sent forth in a bark drawn by a crowned swan.

In the first half of the 10th century,

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Henry, King of Germany, surnamed the Fowler, had come to Antwerp to raise a force against the Hungarians who were then threatening him. He found his chiefs divided and without a leader. Telramund, by reason of his wife's descent, claimed the lordship of Brabant, since Godfrey, the child of the late Duke, had mysteriously disappeared. Elsa was openly looked upon as the child's murderer, and chief among her accusers was Telramund, who had unsuccessfully sought her hand in marriage. Three days were given her to find a champion in accordance with the custom of the time, and as a fulfilment of her dream, Lohengrin appears in his swan-drawn boat to do battle for her innocence.

The reward of the champion is to be Elsa's love. But she must first give a

promise. Whence he came, what his name is, from whom he derives his being, these three questions must never pass between them when they are united as man and wife. Elsa promises implicitly, and her sweet confidence inspires Lohengrin to undertake her defence. In the contest, Frederick is disarmed, but his life is spared by his opponent. Elsa gives herself and all her possessions to Lohengrin, and Telramund and the schemer, Ortrud, are to be outlawed. But before this can be accomplished there is time for the seeds of mistrust to be sown in Elsa's heart. Ortrud and Telramund plot together. A wife and yet not a wife, Elsa, through her curiosity, has to surrender the hero who, from out of the world of her dreams, came to her succour and gained her love. But before Lohengrin departs the

Lohengrin

lost Godfrey is restored. The swan is changed and Ortrud's witchcraft undone. With the death of Elsa, the departure of Lohengrin for Montsalvat, and the proclamation of the youthful Godfrey as the Protector of Brabant, the story ends.

III. THE PRESENTATION OF THE OPERA

WHEN the score of "Lohengrin" was published at Leipzig in 1852 it bore a dedication from Wagner at Zurich "to my dear Liszt." This kind and "rarest" friend had given Lohengrin its first hearing at Weimar two years before: and one of the players in the orchestra was Joachim, then nineteen years old. Wagner, a revolutionary exile, wanted to return secretly to hear it, but he was prevailed upon to keep away. For years afterwards, he said he was the only German music-lover who had not heard Lohengrin.

In 1853 it began its slow, but suc-

cessful course at Wiesbaden. It reached Vienna and Munich in 1858, Berlin in 1859, and Bologna, the home of the opera, in 1871. It was first seen in London in 1875, and proceeded to St. Petersburg in the same year. Paris waited until Lohengrin had reached the ripe age of 44 years before hearing it. In the guise of an Italian Opera it was given at Covent Garden in 1875, with Albani as Elsa, d'Angeri as Ortrud, Maurel as Telramund, Monte as the King, Carpi as Lohengrin, and Capponi as the Herald. In June of the same year it was given at Drury Lane with Nilsson as the Elsa. The Carl Rosa Company gave the first English representation at the old "Her Majesty's" in 1880. Even in those days the "American invasion" was nothing new. Both the Elsa, Julia Gaylord—and the Ortrud,

Lohengrin

Josephine Yorke—were from the other side of the water; whilst Schott, of Hanover, was the Lohengrin, Ludwig the Telramund, and Leslie Crotty the Herald.

The Moody-Manners Opera Company played it for the first time on October 27th, 1899, with Madame Fanny Moody as Elsa, Mr. Hedmond as Lohengrin, Miss Marie Alexander as Ortrud, Mr. William Dever as Telramund, and Mr. Dillon Shallard as the Herald. On this occasion, certain of the usual “cuts” were restored, but it was found subsequently that the accepted acting version contained all that was absolutely necessary for the proper representation of the opera.

Lohengrin was first given at Bayreuth—the opening festival of which was in 1882—in 1894, with the following cast :

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Lillian Nordica (Elsa), Marie Brema (alternately with Pauline Meilhac as Ortrud); Van Dyck (Lohengrin); Carl Grengg (alternately with Mosel as Heinrich); Popovici (Telramund); Bachmann (the Herald). The conductors were Mottl, Richter, Richard Strauss, Kniese and Levi.

IV. CHARACTERS OF THE OPERA
IN THE ORDER OF THEIR
FIRST APPEARANCE.

THE HERALD (*bass*).

The Nobles of Brabant (*chorus of tenors and basses*).

HEINRICH THE FOWLER, the German King (*bass*).

The Saxon and Thuringian Nobles (*chorus of tenors and basses*).

FREDERICK OF TELRAMUND, Count of Brabant (*baritone*).

ORTRUD, his wife (*mezzo-soprano*).

ELSA OF BRABANT (*soprano*).

Elsa's attendant maidens (*chorus of sopranos and contraltos*).

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LOHENGRIN, Knight of the Grail
(*tenor*).

Four Nobles of Brabant, conspirators
with Frederick (2 *tenors*, 2 *basses*).

Four Pages (2 *sopranos*, 2 *contraltos*).

A Chorus of Pages (*sopranos and
contraltos*).

V. MUSIC AND STORY SIDE-BY-SIDE.

THE prelude to Lohengrin is built up from a single beautiful motive which is admirably worked out, and which symbolises the return of the Holy Grail, escorted by a band of celestial beings, to the mysterious castle of Montsalvat, the mountain where it is guarded by faithful knights, pure and devout.

The GRAIL.



Wagner's



This impressive melody, radiant with its suggestions of the supernatural, gives us a glimpse, as it were, of what Parsifal was to be. It reveals how Wagner built up, out of his wealth of ideas, his own particular method of expressing them. It is sufficient merely to hint at this making of a language, rather than to trace each analogy in separate works.

First given to the violins, in the highest register, and divided among sets of four instruments, this motive drifts into the wood-wind, and is then taken up by the violas and violoncellos, passes through the horns, and finally swells gloriously and triumphantly in the brass. Like the blaze of a summer sunset, it dies away

Lohengrin

gradually and mysteriously, and ends in a whisper of the muted strings.

Under a spreading oak, surrounded by the King's Ban, the Lords of Saxony and Thuringia, sits Heinrich the Fowler, the King of Germany. On the left, headed by Frederick of Telramund, are grouped the nobles and the people of Brabant. At the extreme corner stands Ortrud, daughter of the Frisian King, Frederick's wife and evil genius. In the background is the open country through which, by tortuous windings, the river Scheldt finds its way to the sea.

Escorted by four trumpeters sounding the King's call, the King's Herald advances, and demands the fealty of the assembly. The King then describes the situation to his subjects. He tells them of the bitter strife with Hungary, and how he has obtained a long truce

for the purpose of making strong his boundaries and disciplining his forces. The nine years have expired, and a final and conclusive blow will have to be struck at the invaders and disturbers of the peace. He then asks why internal quarrels in Brabant are menacing the unity of his empire, and why there is no prince to rule the country ; and commands Frederick to give him a plain statement of affairs. This fine recitative on the part of the King is broken, in places, by the replies of the chorus.

Frederick tells the King how the Duke of Brabant, at his death, left in his charge young Godfrey, heir to the throne, and Elsa his daughter. One day when walking with Elsa, Godfrey had mysteriously disappeared. Sure in his own mind that the maiden had committed a dastardly crime, he had re-

Lohengrin

nounced her hand and taken Ortrud to wife. He now unfolds his suspicions and demands justice upon the murderess, at the same time reminding the King of his own connection with the princely line, both through his relationship to the Duke of Brabant and his kinship through his wife.

The sympathy of the assembly is given to Elsa, and even the King cannot bring himself to believe in her guilt, but Frederick persists in his accusations, and hints at dark designs on her part, and a secret love, in which, as mistress of Brabant, she would be free to indulge. The King decides to have her placed upon her trial, and in a solemn invocation, asks the guidance of God.

There is a fresh call by the Herald, and Elsa, gentle, grave and sad, slowly enters, attended by her women. A motive

Wagner's

of hope and calm resignation is now heard in the orchestra.

ELSA.



The King asks Elsa if she will take him as her judge, and if she truly understands of what she is accused. As in a dream, Elsa murmurs her brother's name. In a kind of ecstasy she tells how she, after praying to God, had fallen into a deep sleep, in which she dreamed that a Knight in shining armour had been sent by Heaven for her protection. Him she awaits, and in his miraculous defence her safety is assured. In this relation of her dream, the above *Elsa* motive will be recognised in a modified form. Added

Lohengrin

to this is the *Lohengrin* motive, typical of the knightly grace and courtesy which accompanies Lohengrin, with certain changes, triumphantly throughout the opera, until the final bars of the score, when it changes into the minor key.

LOHENGRIN.



Frederick, however, is not to be put off by any semblance of innocence on Elsa's part. Boasting of his past prowess, he defies any one to take up Elsa's part against him. The King then invokes the

judgment of Heaven—a similarity with this motive to that of the treaty in the Ring should be noticed—and asks Elsa to choose a champion. Elsa repeats that she awaits, in confidence and trust, the champion of her dream, on whom she will bestow her heart and her kingdom.

East and west, north and south, the trumpet-call is sounded and the combat proclaimed ; and in an impressive silence the call dies away. At Elsa's entreaty the call is once more sent forth as she prays in fervent ardour that she may not be left to the devices of the wicked men who have compassed her undoing.

As by a miracle, out of the distance comes a boat drawn by a swan, in which stands Lohengrin, clad all in silver. As the slight vessel nears the bank, the crowd look on amazed, Elsa is enraptured, and Frederick and Ortrud

Lohengrin

glare with malevolence. In the orchestra is heard the *Lohengrin* motive, and in complement to it, the one of *Glory*, which has been interwoven with the former motive in the music of Elsa's dream.

Blessing and taking leave of the swan that has borne him, Lohengrin lands.

FAREWELL TO THE SWAN.



(Just before this the Grail motive is again heard.) Elsa is roused from her self-communings as Lohengrin asks her if she will place her honour in his hands; and throwing herself at his feet she consents to become his wife as soon as he

Wagner's

has vindicated her in the sight of all. As the *Grail* is again heard, he tells her in reply that she must never ask his name, nor seek to know from whence he came. Weird and authoritative, from the emphasis that Lohengrin gives it by twice repeating it, the *Mystery of the Name* is heard.

THE MYSTERY OF THE NAME.



Lohengrin and Frederick being now face to face, the herald stations three witnesses for Lohengrin and three for Frederick respectively. After the proclamation (which brings in the King's motive, the *Judgment*), follows the King's Prayer and a quintet which is taken

Lohengrin

up by the chorus. As the fighters engage, the *Judgment*, this time appearing in canon form, comes in at each attack. As the Swan-Knight smites Frederick to the ground and holds him at his mercy, the *Lohengrin* motive is heard. Elsa hails her champion's victory in a fine phrase which is afterwards developed by the chorus, and the finale, which begins at this point, ranks as one of the masterpieces throughout the whole range of opera. As the curtain is about to descend, the *Lohengrin* motive swells out in overpowering brilliance.

THE SECOND ACT.

In the short prelude to the second act we have recalled to us the chief import of the forthcoming action—the instilling into Elsa's mind of that doubt and

curiosity which is to be her ruin. A grumbling, as it were, on the violoncellos reveals Ortrud's plotting.

The scene is laid within the castle walls. In the background, the windows of the Knights' quarters shine like bright spots through the darkness. On one side is the porch of the castle chapel, on the steps of which Frederick and Ortrud are crouching, on the other is the Kemenate—the women's apartments—approached by a flight of steps leading to a balcony.

The long dialogue which takes place between Frederick and Ortrud is a mutual recrimination. This gives place to the shaping of Ortrud's perfidy, and the violoncellos again give out another sombre phrase, *the Doubt*, worked up, as Frederick sings, with a reminiscence of the *Mystery of the Name*. In the swift development of the story, for the musical

Lohengrin

expression of a fixed purpose — that of the intent to instil into Elsa's mind the curiosity which will tear away the mystery which keeps Lohengrin's name hid from her—it would be impossible to find Wagner's equal.

Frederick listens to his wife's plan. Elsa must be worked upon. If she can be made to break her promise, the charm protecting the Swan-Knight will be broken and he will become vulnerable. Then Frederick will challenge him again, and the slightest scratch will seal his doom.

This gloomy episode, finely considered and forcefully sustained, stands out as one of the great things in the opera. A terrible imprecation sung in unison by Frederick and Ortrud, is as the signing and sealing of a compact of revenge. As Elsa now appears on the balcony,

and in a sweet melody sings of her happiness, Ortrud comes out of the darkness and plays the suppliant. In this duet the orchestra gives out *the Doubt* and the *Mystery of the Name*. Already, as Elsa descends, we know that the poison instilled by Ortrud is beginning to work. In wicked exultation, Ortrud offers a wild prayer to her pagan deities, and then, as Elsa approaches, cringes in hypocritical supplication.

As they both enter the castle, the day begins to break. Answering trumpet-calls (in D) are followed by the *King's Call* (in C). Anon, the previous key of D is again brought in, with one of Wagner's simple, yet daringly striking effects. As the courtyard fills with people, the Herald announces that by command of the King, Frederick is banished, that the Swan-Knight is to be Protector of

Lohengrin

Brabant, and that he will accompany the King to fresh triumphs on the battlefield.

The first procession that now passes is that of Elsa, arrayed in her bridal garments. As she reaches the steps of the chapel, Ortrud bursts forth into an impassioned appeal for her husband's re-instatement. Who is this unknown knight that has so quickly insinuated into the favour of the people, she asks.

The second procession, that of the King and the Bridegroom, now approaches. The King bids Ortrud begone ; but soon Frederick, in his turn, blazes out in protest. Frederick, too, asks the knight his name. Lohengrin refuses to reveal aught to any one save Elsa, and she, though obviously troubled, still holds to her faith. Frederick, quick to snatch his opportunities, sees her waver-

ing and tries to counsel her. The Swan-Knight, divining Frederick's intent, for the last time asks Elsa if she will trust him blindly. Elsa passionately promises whole-hearted obedience and implicit trust, and amid the pealing of bells the procession is re-made, the organ peals from the chapel, and the Swan-Knight leads Elsa to the altar.

Through these stirring scenes, no use is made of motives until the arrival of the King. Then the *King's Call* is followed by the *Lohengrin* motive, and the *Judgment* makes its appearance when Frederick is accusing Lohengrin of magical art in gaining the confidence of the King and people. *The Doubt, the Mystery of the Name*, and *Ortrud's Plotting* will all be recognised at the end, when the King is about to enter the chapel with Elsa and Lohengrin.

Lohengrin

THE THIRD ACT.

The prelude to the final act, unlike that of the second, which presages the issue of that which is to follow, is an imaginative piece of music which carries on the wedding festivities. Its note is that of joyfulness, and within the limits of the expressive march and trio Wagner has given us a fine piece of music, gorgeous in colour, and admirably contrasted.

The characteristic opening, the tender and poetical melody of the trio, all give way to the towering supremacy of the familiar second theme, first given to the violoncellos, bassoons and horns, and then taken up majestically by the brass. Like Beethoven, Wagner here breaks out in sheer revelry of tune ; and like the final movement of Beethoven's

violin-concerto this prelude never seems to pall on the hearer.

The scene shows us the marriage chamber. Large windows open to the garden, and near them is a low couch. Pages, women and nobles bring in the newly wedded couple to the strains of a wedding march. This is often pointed to as some of the baser metal which Wagner has used in his music-structure. But surely its weakness is only apparent when it is disjointed and offered as a single piece of music. Placed as it is in the opera, it is a perfect expression of the words. Can one imagine any other setting to "Treulich geführt"?

At first giving herself up to sweet emotion, Elsa lies in her husband's arms ; but soon the inevitable curiosity asserts itself. She becomes more and more insistent, and in vain Lohengrin tries to

Lohengrin

assuage her burning desire to discover his identity. By the appearance of the *Swan* motive we understand Elsa's imagination that the boat is drawing nigh to deprive her of her loved one. In a frenzy she puts the fatal question, and then, while the words are yet on her lips, in burst Frederick and four of the malcontent nobles bent on murder. Elsa, however, has the presence of mind to hand her husband his sword, and Frederick is slain.

This is the beginning of the end. Lohengrin orders the body of Frederick to be carried before the King, and calls to the attendants to robe Elsa. In the presence of the King, he will answer the fatal question. It is here that the motives appear for the first time in this act. *The Doubt* will be heard as Frederick is slain, and, as his body is carried out, the

Judgment. *The Mystery of the Name*, followed by the *Grail*, comes in just as the curtain closes on the scene.

When it rises again, the banks of the Scheldt are again before our view. One by one, the nobles who have assembled to fight under the banner of the Protector, march in before the King, and instead of appearing as a leader to battle, the Protector comes in, preceded by Frederick's corpse, to announce his departure. In sadness, the King listens to the story of Frederick's baseness, and pardons his punisher, turning in horror from the traitor. But the saddest is yet to come. Lohengrin accuses the woman he loves with having violated her promise to the undoing of both, and then reveals the secret. His father is Parsifal, Keeper of the Grail, and he is Lohengrin. The assembly receives

Lohengrin

the tidings in awe. Elsa sees the greatness of her fault, and though too late, pleads for time to expiate it. In vain the nobles beg Lohengrin to stay.

Suddenly the Swan is seen returning. Lohengrin full of sadness takes farewell of it. Those standing near do not realise the meaning of this farewell. Lohengrin, overcome with grief, tells Elsa that he hoped one day to restore her lost brother; and as he gives her his sword, ring and horn, he charges her to keep them for Godfrey, if ever it should chance that he should yet be found. With a last long embrace he approaches the boat.

Ortrud now explains the mystery of the swan. She herself had transformed Godfrey into the swan, and in brutal exultation she points out that, with the departure of Lohengrin, Godfrey will be lost for ever. But Lohengrin overhears

Wagner's Lohengrin

her and prays for the breaking of the spell. In response to his prayer, the dove of the Grail is seen to hover above the swan, and in a moment Godfrey is restored to his proper shape. But Elsa's joy at the restoration of her long-lost brother is eclipsed by her sorrow at the loss of her loved one. The dove directs the course of the boat and Lohengrin departs for ever. The baffled Ortrud drags herself away to die of disappointment, and as the nobles hail their young lord with joy, Elsa breathes her last. In the final music the motives have little

part. Only when the dove appears
does the *Grail* motive
once more assert
itself, and with its
solemn strains
the curtain
falls.

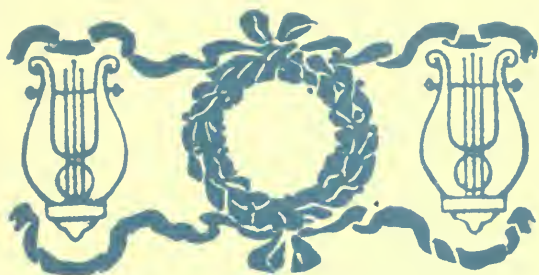
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